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Michael Gott and Leslie Kealhofer-Kemp, eds., *ReFocus: The Films of Rachid Bouchareb*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. xiv + 248 pp. Figures, filmography, index, and notes. £80.00 (hb). ISBN 9-78-1474466516; £24.99 (pb). ISBN 9-78-1474466523; £80.00 (eb). ISBN 9-78-1474466547. £80.00 (pdf). ISBN 9-78-1474466530.

Review by Peter J. Bloom, University of California, Santa Barbara.

This edited collection offers an interdisciplinary approach to the work of Rachid Bouchareb (b. 1953 in Paris) as a global French filmmaker of North African descent. Bouchareb is best known for the film *Days of Glory* (2006) which was actively promoted internationally. The editors, however, are keen to argue that Bouchareb's films extend beyond national culture towards a so-called "francosphere," or a francophone sphere of influence that involves interaction with an extended French linguistic, geopolitical, and cultural interactive frame. The volume consists of twelve chapters and is divided into two parts with an introduction and filmography. The first part entitled "A Multidimensional Oeuvre" adapts an ongoing address to multicultural identity and situations within a French-inspired but geographically disparate mise-en-scène. The seven chapters in this section refer to groupings of Bouchareb's films as a means of addressing production contexts, film genres, and an assortment of themes associated with questions of social, gender, and political identity. The second half of the volume is entitled "Case Studies," for which each of the five chapters focus primarily on a single film. Thematic discussions focused on identity and geographic relocations often overlap from one chapter to the next, but several contributions demonstrate intrinsically well considered approaches. Given that prospective readers of this volume are likely to pick it up because of their interest in Bouchareb's films, I have chosen to summarize each of the chapters sequentially to contribute to this process of selection and will make some final observations.

Following the very helpful introduction by the co-editors that positions Bouchareb as a global French filmmaker, the first chapter by Leslie Kealhofer-Kemp examines Bouchareb's cinema as a vehicle for encounters. She emphasizes Edouard Glissant's notion of the "archipelago" in relation to formative encounters and affinities with people and places within David Damrosch's world literature framework adapted as *cinéma-monde*. The second chapter by Michael Gott focuses on transnational mobile movies through Bouchareb's *Bâton Rouge* (1985) in its approach to transcending metropolitan and colonial boundaries. Gott emphasizes camera techniques as with tracking shots by reference to particular episodes in *Bâton Rouge* as part of the conventions of the road movie. This approach implies a perceptual context indebted to the diorama and mobile vision that enables a quality of border crossing. Several additional films are described in this light including *Little Senegal* (2001), *London River* (2009), and *Road to Istanbul* (2016). The approach of

these films bears similarities to Tony Gatlif's *Exiles* (2004) and Ismaël Ferroukhi's *Le Grand Voyage* (2004). Towards this end, Gott claims that a cinematic remapping of the new France emerges in a newly conceived spatial imagination of migrants from the Hexagon.

The third chapter by Kaya Davies Hayon examines what she describes as the *intimiste* context for Bouchareb's films in their introspective qualities that highlight gendered identities through *Days of Glory*, *Outside the Law* (2010), and *My Family's Honor* (1998). She is particularly interested in how these films foreground strong female characters of North African descent that have direct implications for an assertive context for less than well understood contexts for female autonomy. This is then followed by David Pettersen's discussion in chapter four that examines Bouchareb's films from the perspective of genre and universalism which he claims is part of a longer history of French cinema where the effect of "multiculture" in films such as *Cheb* (1991), *Dust of Life* (1995), and *Belleville Cop* (2018) involve what he describes as a means of reaccentuating the voice in relation to a sensibility charted in the New Wave cinema of François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard. Of great interest in this discussion is how Pettersen argues that several of Bouchareb's films can be understood through a wide array of Anglo-American war films, westerns, and American comedies featuring Eddie Murphy among others. This chapter thus considers the extent to which popular Hollywood genres are being adapted to a universalizing paradigm that enables difference.

The same question of popular genres is picked up by Nabil Boudraa and Ahmed Bedjaoui in chapter five where they consider the American dimensions of Bouchareb's oeuvre by emphasizing his use of US-based locations. Boudraa and Bedjaoui contend that Bouchareb is advocating for what Deleuze and Guattari have described as a "rhizomatic identity," where exchange is possible without diluting one's own identity or vanishing into a negative space. The potency of the buddy genre is thus evoked along with the war film and the gangster film as with *The Godfather* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1972). They then consider how Bouchareb's work goes beyond American culture in having it serve as a springboard for a minority cinema. The issue of the scaling up of production is considered by reference to *Days of Glory* in chapter six by Julien Gaertner. Upon its release, this film was considered an important contribution to debates about the role of North African soldiers who defended and contributed to liberating occupied France; and it was closely aligned with raising awareness about the imperative that the French state should grant a pension to the soldiers depicted in the film. Significantly, Gaertner's discussion points to its political staging with significant insight and considers the extent to which Bouchareb's big budget film may be understood as a watershed related to reorienting public attitudes in relation to Franco-Algerian identity. He emphasizes how Arabs are depicted as heroes or positioned in heroic roles by referring to popular press coverage and the film's promotion that involved Jacques Chirac, then President of the Republic. The extent to which the figure of the Arab is part of a carefully staged political debate involving the integration of Maghrebi immigrants in France serves as partial acknowledgement of the French colonial legacy. The lingering question however that Gaertner could have further examined is the manner in which Bouchareb was ushered into a political identity regime primed to assert a carefully scripted conception of political rights. The final chapter in this part of the volume by the eminent literary theorist Mireille Rosello considers the role of terrorism and conceptions of the national as a backdrop in relation to several of Bouchareb's films. In one instance her approach to events driven by terrorism and globalization leads her to explore the complex human relationships that evolve in *London River* through an encounter between grieving parents. Rosello considers how Bouchareb enables viewers to

identify with a shared sense of sympathetic grief about the manner in which polarizing political circumstances create opportunities for human solidarity.

The second part of the volume, or the “Case Studies,” is primarily focused on individual films. In chapter eight, Michael O’Riley considers the aesthetics of confinement in his discussion of *Dust of Life* by reference to Paul Ricoeur’s conception of a matrix of memory. Gemma King’s discussion of *Little Senegal* in chapter nine returns to a multilingual expanse of what she describes as a decentered space and a series of figures or scenes in the film itself. Jennifer Howell’s contribution in chapter ten focuses on Bouchareb’s *Outside the Law* that is a granular consideration of how the film was reviewed and integrated into the ongoing context for political debates of the period. This essay considers some of the same issues discussed in Julien Gaertner’s consideration of *Days of Glory*, and yet develops a careful analysis of how the film contributes to a post-colonial counternarrative as part of ongoing culture debates upon its release; it also evokes some of the themes related to terrorism described by Rosello. In chapter eleven, Anne Donadey addresses the upending of genre conventions in *Just Like a Woman* (2012). She describes it as a postcolonial feminist film which takes place in Chicago and deploys conventions of the American Road movie genre. It mirrors some of the same vocabulary present in Hayes’s conception of *intimiste* cinema, such that Donadey’s discussion considers the elaboration of the female buddy genre film typically understood in relation to *Thelma and Louise* (dir. Ridley Scott, 1991). The final contribution by Valérie Orlando, chapter twelve, considers one of Bouchareb’s more recent films, *Two Men in Town* (2014), that evokes the theme of the “world-in-motion.” It draws on the figure of -scapes in Arjun Appadurai’s well known monograph, *Modernity at Large* (1996), and asserts its renewed relevance through this procedural drama.

Upon reviewing this edited collection, it became clear that many of the authors inhabit the sphere between French Literary Studies, Feminist Studies, and Film Studies in North America. It points to how scholars in these fields are considering issues of authorship and narrative studies within an expanded conception of multiculturalism and globalization. It is also increasingly the case that scholars more engaged in media studies are now shifting towards a different kind of criticism that involves the study of media formats that drive debates about viewership rather than the filmmaker as the essential agent. In other words, instead of the film author asserting meaning, there has been a wider consideration of how media-making creates a number of different sites for authorship beyond the intentionality of the filmmaker as primary agent. This volume is certainly a very useful contribution to presenting so many of Bouchareb’s important and significantly overlooked films. I am hopeful that this exploration of multicultural identity formations can be developed to consider the extent to which the film author is also multi-sited and increasingly serving a sophisticated financialized media political complex that is simultaneously corporate, national, and global.

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Valérie K. Orlando, “Relations of Disjuncture in a ‘World-in-Motion’: Rachid Bouchareb’s *La Voie de l’ennemi/ Two Men in Town*”

Appendix, Filmography of Rachid Bouchareb

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